

THE HONORABLE JOHN C. COUGHENOUR

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON
AT SEATTLE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

v.

ISRAEL PEREZ VILLANUEVA,

Defendant.

CASE NO. CR19-0192-JCC

ORDER

This matter comes before the Court on Defendant's unopposed motion to proceed with sentencing by video conference (Dkt. No. 42). Having thoroughly considered the motion and the relevant record, the Court GRANTS the motion for the reasons explained herein.

I. BACKGROUND

In February 2020, pursuant to a plea agreement, Defendant pleaded guilty to possession of methamphetamine and heroin with intent to distribute and possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime. (*See* Dkt. Nos. 12, 21, 23, 25.) He is currently detained pending sentencing, which is scheduled for February 3, 2021. (Dkt. No. 41.) By order of Chief Judge Ricardo S. Martinez, all criminal in-person hearings scheduled to occur before March 31, 2021, have been continued. *See* W.D. Wash., General Order No. 18-20 at 2 (Dec. 30, 2020). Defendant consents to proceed with his sentencing by videoconference and indicates that a further delay would cause serious harm to the interests of justice. (Dkt. No. 42 at 1–2.)

II. DISCUSSION

Because of the health risks posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Court may conduct a felony sentencing hearing by video conference if the Court finds that the sentencing cannot be further delayed without serious harm to the interests of justice. *See* W.D. Wash., General Order No. 17-20 (Dec. 23, 2020), 04-20 (Mar. 30, 2020). Defendant has a strong interest in the speedy resolution of this matter, but in-person proceedings are unlikely to resume until at least March 31, 2021. W.D. Wash., General Order No. 18-20 (Dec. 30, 2020). Absent a remote proceeding, Defendant cannot be sentenced for months, despite having entered guilty pleas long ago. Taking into account these circumstances, as well as Defendant's stated desire to move forward with his sentencing now, the Court FINDS that his sentencing cannot be further delayed without serious harm to the interests of justice.

III. CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, the Court GRANTS Defendant's motion to conduct a remote sentencing hearing (Dkt. No. 42).

DATED this 29th day of January 2021.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John C. Coughenour", written over a horizontal line.

John C. Coughenour
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE